

60p

# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Besieged by UFOs

The Pat McAdam mystery

The case for Harry Price

The real Anastasia?

Quest for Avalon

101



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# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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## In next week's issue

To be plummeted into the future, however briefly, is an unnerving experience . . . but not as uncommon as might be imagined. We tell the stories of some people who have unintentionally crashed the time barrier in **Timeslips**. In the 18th century the controversial inventor Orffyreus claimed to have invented a machine that required no energy of any sort to keep it working – but had he? **Perpetual motion** looks at the apparently insurmountable problems of doing so, even today. The best-documented, and most bitterly contested, 'crashed saucer' story – the Roswell incident – is probed in **UFO cover up**, while in **ESP on test** we show how another exponent of the Ganzfeld telepathy-inducing technique achieves her successes. And **Harry Oldfield** is taking the medical world by storm with his unorthodox diagnosing techniques . . .

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**The disappearance of young Pat McAdam baffled the Scottish police. Years after they had given up the hunt, an enterprising newspaperman brought in a psychic sleuth – the clairvoyant Gerard Croiset. COLIN GODMAN describes the trail of clues that Croiset brought to light**

PAT MCADAM, A SCOTTISH TEENAGER, went missing on 19 February 1967. She was one of the 3000 or so people who disappear in Britain every year. Most of these people are found again; Pat was one of the five per cent who are not. The search for the missing girl had one remarkable feature: detective work by the Dutch clairvoyant Gerard Croiset (see page 488).

Croiset was introduced to the case by a Dumfries journalist, Frank Ryan of the *Daily Record*, who had covered Pat's disappearance and the police investigation from the beginning. When, by chance, he was in Holland he decided to visit Gerard Croiset in Utrecht. This meeting in 1970 and Croiset's subsequent work with Ryan form the basis of one of the psychic's most striking cases.

The Dumfries CID had been able to reconstruct Pat McAdam's last recorded movements fairly easily. Pat was 17 years old and worked in a local knitwear factory. She and a friend, Hazel Campbell from nearby Annan, decided to go to Glasgow on Saturday, 18 February. They took the bus to Gretna and then hitched a lift into Glasgow. The two girls spent the day shopping. Hazel bought clothes and shoes and they both bought black patent leather handbags.

Pat and Hazel met some young people

Gerard Croiset, the clairvoyant who has often helped the Dutch police in their investigations, holding a picture of Pat McAdam (inset), who was 17 when she vanished in 1967

over a drink and went to the Flamingo dance hall. Just before midnight the girls went to a boy's house where there was a party going on. They stayed there after the party.

Early the next day – Sunday, 19 February – the girls set off for Central Station, where they washed before catching the bus to London Road. There they did not have to wait long before a lorry stopped to offer them a lift. At about 11.30 the driver pulled into a café at the Star service station at Lesmahagow, 20 miles (32 kilometres) from Glasgow on the A74 road. The girls were hungry and Pat ate a hearty meal, consisting of a hamburger, eggs and beans. Hazel was tired and left to sleep in the cab of the lorry while

## **A psychic search party**





the driver and Pat drank whiskies in the café. When the three continued their journey south Hazel dozed while Pat and the driver chatted together.

At Kirkpatrick Fleming the lorry swung off the A74 towards Annan. The girls realised that the driver was leaving his route to take them home. Hazel was dropped outside the Co-operative Stores in Annan just as the town clock showed 2 p.m.

From that moment no one has heard from Pat McAdam.

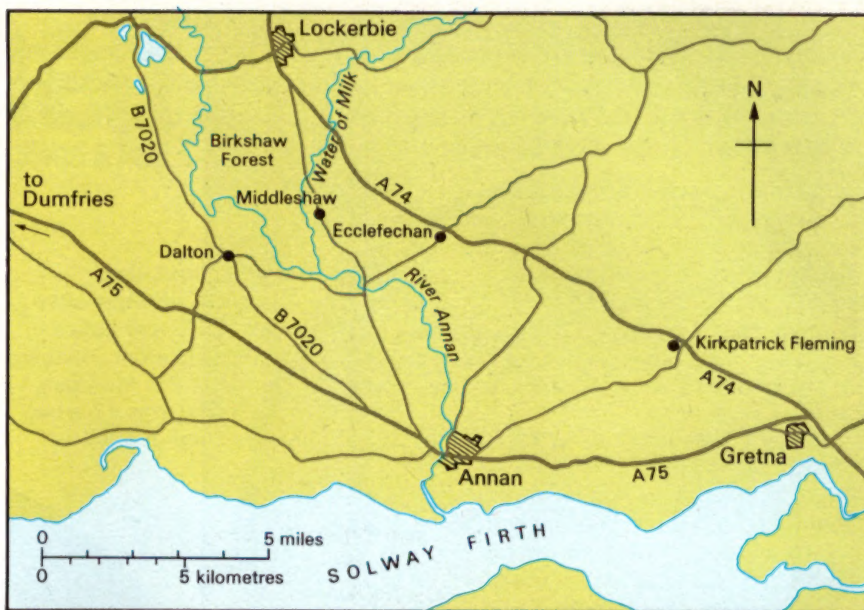
On Tuesday, 21 February Pat's parents, Mary and Matthew McAdam of Lochside Road, Dumfries, went to the police station to report their daughter's disappearance. Pat's description was issued; it read: 'Patricia Mary McAdam, born 25.6.49, medium build, fresh complexion, brown eyes, dark hair cut in a "Mia Farrow" style.' The police learned that she had been wearing a purple coat over a black and silver woollen dress, low-cut and sleeveless. She had black suede shoes, a yellow cardigan and a green and red headscarf. Mrs McAdam said Hazel assumed that the lorry had dropped Pat at home before continuing south to Hull, the driver's destination.

### The trail peters out

The police suspected that Pat may have intended to leave home and would get in touch, sooner or later, with her family. But as time passed it became clear that Pat had not run away. She was very interested in clothes – yet she left a complete wardrobe behind. She enjoyed a good time – yet she left £47 in cash at home. She did not take her national insurance card and has never applied for a replacement.

The police enquiry hinged on tracing the lorry driver. Despite a nationwide appeal it took three weeks to find him. He claimed that he had dropped Pat on the outskirts of Dumfries but had no idea where she was now. Since the driver was the last person known to have seen Pat alive, efforts were concentrated on establishing the lorry's movements after it left Annan. Witnesses came forward, and eventually its route was reconstructed. After setting out on the A75 to Dumfries the lorry turned off and took the narrow B7020 towards the village of Dalton. The lorry was large – a 26-tonne articulated vehicle. It blocked the narrow lanes, and local people remembered seeing just such a lorry manoeuvring north of Dalton, near Williamwath Bridge. It could have been on its way to the Birkshaw Forest and the A74, leading towards the south. The police continued to appeal for witnesses:

Will any person who saw a motor lorry on 19th February anywhere in Dumfriesshire or the adjoining areas, in any unusual circumstances – for instance, stationary in a lay-by or on a quiet country road – please communicate immediately with the police.



The same day, 17 March, police with tracker dogs combed the undergrowth in the Dalton area but found no clues.

The Regional Crime Squad in Glasgow joined the hunt on 20 March. The *Daily Record* distributed posters and leaflets throughout the country and the lorry driver faced more interviews with the police. Pat's father expressed fears that something terrible had happened to his daughter, and the police were prepared to accept that it had. The rest of the month saw increased digging in the lonely woodlands and river banks of the search area.

In April there were responses to the posters but they produced no leads. Despite television appeals by Mrs McAdam nothing was heard from Pat. Detective-Inspector Cullinan, in charge of the investigation, said he believed the secret of Pat's disappearance lay hidden in the Dalton area; he begged the villagers to rack their brains to recall any odd





Left: the region of Dumfriesshire and Galloway, in south-western Scotland, where Pat was last seen. The lorry in which she was hitch-hiking set out along the A75 road from Annan towards Dumfries, where Pat lived, but turned off onto the B7020

Right: one of the posters with which the *Daily Record* flooded Scotland in a bid to get some hint of Pat's fate



Above: the High Street in Annan, where Hazel Campbell finished her journey and saw her friend Pat for the last time

Left: a country road near the village of Dalton. This was the heart of the search area, following reports that a lorry seen near here resembled the one in which Pat took her last ride

happenings on that fateful Sunday in February. The Dumfries police force held regular press conferences, an unusual event in missing persons cases. They dug regularly for Pat's body between Annan and Dumfries.

Frank Ryan, the journalist, had all this in the back of his mind when he found himself in Holland in 1970, three years later. Ryan knew that the Dutch clairvoyant Gerard Croiset had been involved in the hunt for Muriel McKay, a Fleet Street newspaperman's wife who had been kidnapped in 1969. Her body was never found, and it was conjectured that her corpse had been cut up and fed to pigs. Croiset was involved to the extent that relatives of the missing woman had asked him to help.

### Directions from a psychic

On 16 February 1970 Frank Ryan arrived in Utrecht to talk to Croiset at his home at 21 Willem Zwigerstraat (William II Street) where he had small consulting rooms and an office. Ryan explained that he was interested in a missing girl. He showed Croiset the poster bearing Pat's picture and said she had gone missing three years earlier. Ryan recalls that Croiset interrupted, not wishing to be told any more. Just two questions, he said, needed answering. Was the girl happy at home? And where was she last seen? Frank answered and indicated the general area of south-west Scotland on a map he had brought. Croiset paused and then said he 'saw' a transport café. This, he explained, had significance in the story. Next Ryan indicated, with the map, the area between Annan and Dumfries where Hazel had last seen Pat. Concentrating on the area in more detail, Croiset said that he 'saw' a place where there were fir trees and exposed tree roots on the banks of a river. He described vividly how water had undermined the banks. Near there, he said, was a flat bridge over the river, with grey tubular railings. Ryan would find this bridge, he was told, at the foot of a hill. If he crossed the bridge, Croiset continued, he would come to a cottage; the building was being used for some other purpose than as a residence, for it had advertising signs on it. Round the cottage would be found a white paling fence.

Croiset sketched the hilly setting rapidly on large sheets of notepaper, which he gave to Ryan. He instructed Ryan not to publish anything until he found the site and photographed it. Ryan returned to Dumfries in a state of some excitement and set off with a local photographer, Jack Johnstone, to the search area.

Croiset seemed to have been describing the Williamwath Bridge, near Dalton. To Ryan's dismay the bridge, though flat, was not in the setting the Dutchman had described. But Jack Johnstone recalled that there was a bridge in Middleshaw, about 3 miles (5 kilometres) away. Ryan had not been



aware of this, as there had been no reports of the lorry there. However, as they drove towards it Frank Ryan's hair stood on end.

It was exactly as Croiset had described. The bridge, lying at the foot of a hill, had grey tubular railings. Ryan searched for a particular detail that Croiset had predicted and sketched: bent railings, together with a kink in the handrail. In fact none of the rails was bent, but Johnstone photographed a wire fence attached to the bridge that drooped in exactly the way the Dutchman had pictured. Was it the bridge in Croiset's vision? They looked for other details. They found that the river bank was indeed undermined, and the tree roots were exposed.

There was a building, carrying advertising signs and surrounded by a white fence, a short distance up the road from the bridge. As Croiset had described, the hills were covered in fir trees.

Ryan decided it was time to tell Mrs McAdam what he was doing. He explained that Croiset needed to make contact with something belonging to Pat. He borrowed the girl's Bible and set off for Utrecht.

Croiset was delighted when shown the photographs. 'This is what I saw!' he exclaimed. He was very impressed with the accuracy of the detail of his vision and was even more determined to help Ryan.

When he was handed Pat McAdam's Bible, Croiset said bluntly, 'She's dead.' With no hesitation he told Ryan she had been buried in the area he had 'seen'. The body lay hidden, he said, in a sort of cave made by the tree roots in the river bank. Ryan pressed for more details and Croiset said he would try to 'see' clothing belonging to the girl. Ryan's large-scale map was produced and Croiset showed him where to look: at a point marked 'Broom Cottage' Ryan would find a car with a wheelbarrow beside it. Later the interpreter clarified this: he told Ryan that the car was only part of a car – a wreck with a



wheelbarrow leaning against it.

After this detailed briefing Ryan returned to Dumfries, determined to collect witnesses before his next visit to the area. The bridge that figured so clearly in Croiset's first vision crosses a river called the Water of Milk, west of Middleshaw; the car in the second vision was predicted to be three quarters of a mile (1 kilometre) downstream. Ryan told his wife and another journalist just what he was hoping to find, and the party set off for Broom.

There, in the garden of Broom Cottage, exactly as Croiset had described it, was an old green Ford Popular with no wheels, being used as a henhouse. An old wheelbarrow was leaning against the boot. It was an electrifying experience for the little search party. Later Frank Ryan emphasised that he had never been near Broom Cottage in his life and therefore could not be persuaded that he had managed to transfer, unconsciously, an image of the scene to Croiset. For Ryan this second visit was proof that Gerard Croiset was using some power quite beyond the normal.

Ryan wrote up the story for the *Daily Record* and told his friend Detective-Inspector Cullinan exactly what had happened. That night, Sunday, 15 February 1970, Ryan and two detectives returned to the spot to search for clothing. Croiset had been right. The remains of a black dress, parts of a handbag and a stocking were caught in the undergrowth on the river bank.

These discoveries made front page news. Local people waited impatiently for the police to announce developments. When they came, they were disappointing. No trace of Pat's body had come to light – and the clothing had been eliminated from the enquiry. The long-sleeved dress was apparently not Pat's, and the other articles, along with a quantity of rubbish, were merely debris deposited by floodwater. It seemed



Above: one of Croiset's predictions appears on this map, drawn by him. The map shows the Water of Milk; at the top left is the bridge at Middleshaw, and at the bottom right is the house carrying advertising signs. The tangled tree roots in the river bank are arrowed (trees rise above them). The newly predicted item is an old car, with a barrow leaning against it (the twin circles and crosses to the left of the roots). These objects were later found by the journalist Frank Ryan

Below: the bridge across the Milk at Middleshaw

that three years after Pat's disappearance there was to be no dramatic dénouement.

Ryan returned, yet again, to Utrecht to explain the setbacks. Croiset was disappointed but explained that when he was focusing on a scene he could not be sure that the details he 'saw' would help the police. He was pleased, however, with the new photographs and saw them as encouraging proof that he had received a vision of a place he could never have seen with his own eyes. Far from being discouraged, Croiset proceeded to give Ryan a description of the man that the police should question. He was, he said, aged between 32 and 34, 5 feet 4 inches (1.63 metres) tall and dark-haired, and had one ear larger than the other. Croiset claimed to have a mental image of Pat taking a walk with this man before she died. They had walked near an area where trees had been felled, and her body was nearby.



### Building up a picture

On 19 February Ryan conducted seven interviews with Croiset, each one adding a little to the picture that the clairvoyant was painting of Pat's last hours. Forestry workers confirmed that there had been felling in recent years. Mrs McAdam recalled giving Pat £5 to buy a new dress. Croiset was still convinced that the dress found by Ryan was Pat's – not the one she had been wearing but one she had bought. The police, however, had no evidence of Pat having bought a dress in Glasgow: Hazel had bought clothes but, she insisted, Pat had bought only the handbag.

Hopes of finding more clues in the area were dashed by a heavy snowfall and there were no developments until the end of the month. The *Daily Record* realised that they had a strong story on their hands; they flew Gerard Croiset to Scotland to visit the scenes he had described. Accompanied by the head



of the local CID he spent a day touring the area. He had never been in Scotland before, but he was sure of everything he had told Ryan. He was convinced that Pat had been murdered. He claimed that her body had been dumped in the Water of Milk and, after being lodged in the tree roots, had been swept away to sea. If this is true, her body will probably never be found.

Five years later, in 1975, a BBC Television team, of which the author was a member, carried out its own investigation into the Pat McAdam case. In Utrecht, Croiset was able to recall the case clearly from the notes he had made at the time. He believed there had been a complete triumph for his clairvoyance, as a friend had told him, misleadingly, that the police search had produced a body.

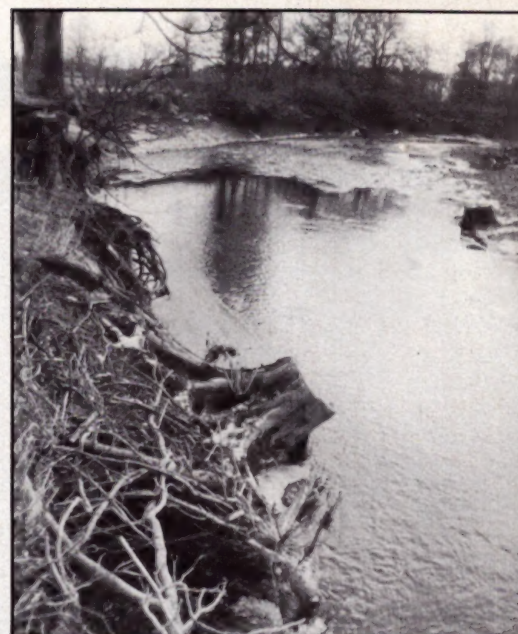
A body had indeed been found in the area, but it was not Pat's. In a routine search the remains of a woman had been found in a pond. She was in her forties, wore a wedding ring and had coins in her possession dating from after Pat's disappearance.

The fate of the girl has never been established. The person who, as far as is known, saw her last – the lorry driver – did not shed any more light on it. Subsequently he was sent to prison to serve two concurrent life sentences for offences involving other people: one sentence was for murder, the other for crimes including rape and attempted murder. The judge recommended that he be detained in prison for at least 30 years.

Despite the fact that Pat McAdam was never found, alive or dead, Gerard Croiset maintained that this case stood as one of his most successful. He clung to this belief until his death in 1980 at the age of 71.

How did Croiset score his 'hits'? Could Frank Ryan unwittingly have transmitted images of the search area to him? All the pertinent facts of the case were in Ryan's mind and Croiset may have 'read' them somehow. Typical Croiset cases are full of

Right: tangled tree roots, exposed on the bank of the Water of Milk, were 'seen' clairvoyantly by Croiset. Here, he said, Pat's body had been caught for a while after being thrown into the river



images of drowning. In the Netherlands the canals claim as many victims as the roads and most missing persons are eventually found there. Similarly bridges, white-painted wooden fences and tubular railings are to be seen everywhere in the Netherlands. The timber house with the advertising signs at Middleshaw has a Dutch look about it. Did Croiset, using Ryan as a link, seize on these familiar images?

Had Pat McAdam's body been found the case would have become the classic work of psychic detection. Before rejecting the clairvoyant's successes as pure coincidence, one must pause and calculate the odds against finding a cottage with a particular garden containing an old car with a wheelbarrow leaning against it. That car and barrow are testimony to the accuracy of the strange vision that came to Gerard Croiset, hundreds of miles away in Utrecht.

Below: the battered remains of a Ford Popular, against which a wheelbarrow leans in the garden of Broom Cottage, exactly as predicted by Gerard Croiset. When Ryan, with two companions, encountered this scene he became fully convinced of Croiset's powers





# The enchanted island



**One reason why Glastonbury is such a fascinating place is the speculation that it is the Avalon of Arthurian legend – and a grave said to be Arthur's was unearthed there 800 years ago. But, asks PAUL BEGG, could that remarkable find have been a hoax?**

SINCE THE 12TH CENTURY, Glastonbury and Avalon have been identified as one and the same place. But the connection cannot be traced beyond a work called *De instructione principis*, written about 1193 by a cleric named Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales, also called Gerald de Barri). He said that what was known as Glastonbury in his day had in ancient times been called the Isle of Avalon. 'In Welsh it is called "Ynys Avallon", which means Isle of Apples . . . Years ago the district had also been called "Ynys Gutrin" in Welsh, that is, the Island of Glass. . . .'

In Celtic mythology the apple is the fruit of the Otherworld, the dwelling place of the gods in which mortals could also live after death – and sometimes visit while alive. The story of the fatally wounded Arthur being carried off to Avalon, where, immortal, he waited to return in the time of his nation's greatest need, clearly belongs to a body of Celtic lore in which Avalon is this kind of Otherworld. If Glastonbury and Avalon are one, then Glastonbury – an island surrounded by marshes in Arthur's time and before – certainly could have been a Celtic pagan site, and an important one. If Glastonbury and Avalon are indeed the same place.

It has been argued that, since Giraldus Cambrensis had no reason to make up the

story, it has to be assumed that he was reporting a piece of existing lore. Avalon was certainly Arthur's final resting place by traditional belief. But how had the name Glastonbury been derived from the name Avalon? This was the problem Giraldus probably faced. Did he solve it by inventing a derivation? He never tells us how the name change occurred, saying only that the Saxons derived Glastonbury from the Welsh name meaning 'Isle of Glass'.

Much rests, then, on the genuineness of the exhumation of Arthur's grave at Glastonbury, which is said to have been carried out by the monks around 1191. It is important not only from the point of view of Arthurian studies, but also with regard to the history of

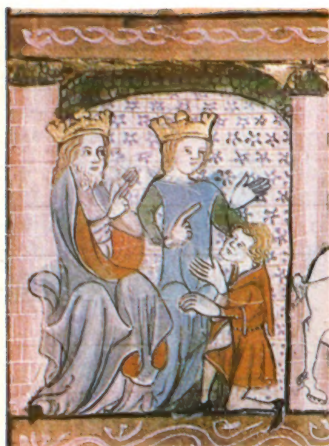


During the archaeological dig at Glastonbury Tor from 1964 to 1966 (top), shards of ancient Mediterranean pottery (above) were found. Since this pottery dates from some time between the 5th and 7th centuries, it argues for the presence of a community on the Tor during the 'Arthurian period'. But there is no certainty that such a settlement was Christian or that it was connected with the Old Church in Glastonbury. And that is the kind of link needed to establish that, if Arthur had really been buried in the Old Church (later the site of Glastonbury Abbey), then Glastonbury is the same place as Avalon

Glastonbury as a whole. This takes us back to the beginning of Christianity in the region. So far the archaeological evidence does not substantiate the claim that a significant Christian community existed at Glastonbury in the time of Arthur and before. It is generally accepted that the Old Church was older than the abbey, but precisely when it was built, and by whom, is unknown. Even if the Old Church was not built until the Dark Ages, perhaps for the use of the community that some believe lived on the Tor, it remains possible for Arthur to have been buried there. On the other hand, if the Old Church was not constructed until after the time of Arthur – or if a Christian community did not exist at Glastonbury until after Arthur – most of the legends crumble, and the importance of Glastonbury fails to shine so brightly.

Again, the first and best account of the exhumation comes from Giraldus Cambrensis, who visited Glastonbury about 1193. He tells us that a Welsh bard or soothsayer





Above: Arthur, Guinevere and Gawain. Legend has it that Arthur was buried in Avalon, so the discovery of his grave at Glastonbury could be taken as proof that the two are the same – if his grave was genuine

Right: the 25-foot contour is the demarcation of the Island of Glastonbury. In antiquity, this area was surrounded much of the time by inarshes and swamps, which made it a true island

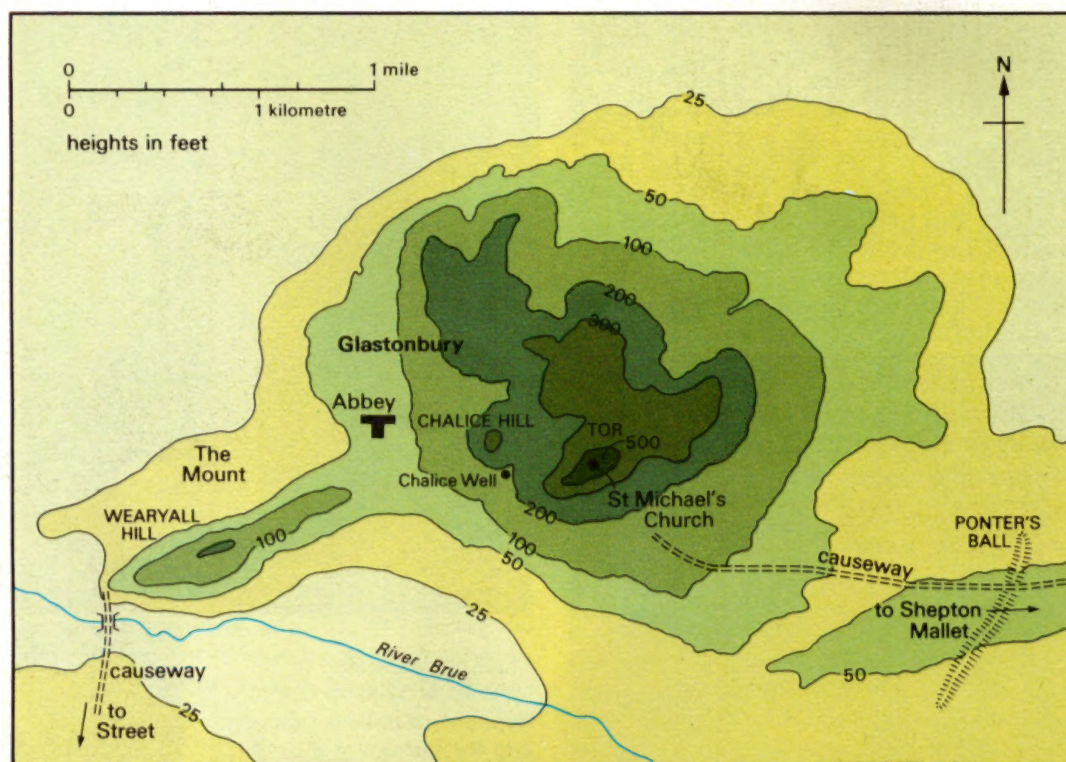
Below: Henry II, who is said to have learned about the location of Arthur's grave from a soothsayer. It was advantageous for him to have the grave found on English soil because this weakened Arthur's Welsh ties and solidified Henry's position as Arthur's heir

revealed the location of Arthur's grave to Henry II, who was anxious to have it found on English soil. This was important to Henry for two reasons: it would end Welsh dreams of Arthur's return to break the yoke of the Norman-English, and it would strengthen his own title to succeed Arthur. Giraldus's account adds that 'there had been some indications in the abbey records that the body would be discovered on this spot.'

In the grave were found the bones of a huge man, as Arthur was reputed to be. Beside him were the remains of a woman whose skull still bore some golden hair, which crumbled to dust when touched by a monk. Also found was a lead cross, which

but his successor, Richard I, who became king in 1189, refused funds and left the monks in financial straits. Because the Arthurian romances were at the time at the height of their popularity, the discovery of Arthur's grave would attract pilgrims, who were a primary source of revenue.

If the abbey records had given some indication that Arthur was buried there, as Giraldus says in 1193, why was there no mention of this in William of Malmesbury's history of Glastonbury in 1130? Why did William, one of the most highly regarded early historians, categorically state that nobody knew where Arthur's grave was located?



bore an inscription saying that King Arthur and his second wife, Guinevere, were buried there, in the 'Isle of Avalon' (see page 1349).

In 1962 archaeologists at Glastonbury discovered a large irregular hole, which had been dug out and refilled about 1190. From its location, it is likely that this hole was a grave, and the date fits with that of the claimed exhumation of Arthur. A body, then, was almost certainly dug up about 1190. But was it Arthur's?

This is one of the great unanswered questions in Arthurian studies, but the general opinion seems to be that it was not the body of Arthur. Why, then, would the monks perpetrate a hoax? The most probable answer is that they were looking for a way out of their financial difficulties caused by the disastrous fire at the abbey in 1184. The Old Church and many of the relics were destroyed, and the abbey itself was badly damaged in this fire. Henry II provided generously for the repairs and rebuilding,

It seems a remarkable coincidence that, about seven years after the great fire, the grave of Arthur – such an attraction to pilgrims – should have been found just when Glastonbury was in dire need of funds.

On balance, it is probably easier to believe that the grave was a fake.

The matter of Arthur's grave has been dealt with at such length because it is a clear example of a romantic tale that arose after the great fire of 1184, and so many of the Glastonbury legends seem to have originated after that event. Who knows how different the picture would be if the Glastonbury archives had survived this fire and the passage of time? And if the monks were capable of fraud on the scale of the exhumation of Arthur's grave, they would have found it even simpler to produce the legend of Joseph of Arimathea and the veneration of the Holy Thorn, and much else that makes Glastonbury so special.

The absence of solid evidence, however,





## Glastonbury

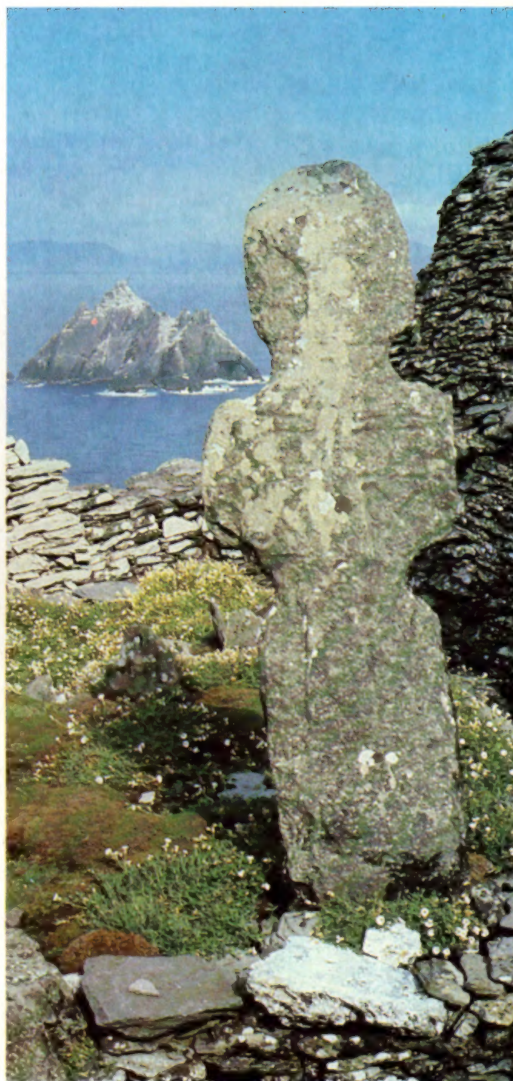
does not deter many people from believing that Glastonbury was Avalon, that it was once an important pagan sacred site and the centre of earth forces. They find further confirmation in the fact that the chapel topping Glastonbury Tor is dedicated to St Michael the Archangel. The significance of St Michael comes from a complex hypothesis involving ley lines, dragon cults, and the Christianising of pagan customs by the early Church.

It has been suggested that such antiquities as standing stones, burial mounds and stone circles were the focal point of pagan ceremonies related to astronomical events, and that they were purposefully located along the ley lines marking the earth force. Places where these lines cross, called nodal points, are thought to be of special sanctity. One important nodal point is Glastonbury, at which a number of leys cross. One of these is the so-called Great Ley, a 'geomantic corridor' or strip of land that links St Michael's Mount in Cornwall with Glastonbury and Avebury and finishes on the east coast just north of Lowestoft in Suffolk. Running 380 miles (612 kilometres), it is the longest stretch of unbroken land in southern Britain; in addition it follows the direction of the May Day sunrise.

### Diabolical baby basting

Walpurgis night, the eve of May Day, is the first of the major pagan festivals. In one of those odd juxtapositions, this pagan celebration is named after a Christian saint, Walburga (c.710–779). She was an Anglo-Saxon nun who died in Germany and around whom a cult gathered when her shrine was said to exude a 'miraculous oil'. In common with other seasonal pagan festivals, Walpurgis night dates from before the days of agriculture and was celebrated with many rites. These include, it is said, the diabolical act of baby basting and other human sacrifices with which the Druids made their hilltop holy places hideous. From early medieval times, the memory of May Day has lived on with Robin Hood festivals, hobby horses and maypoles, all of which have pagan associations.

In his book *A view over Atlantis*, John Michell pointed out that the Great Ley and other leys are dotted with many places associated with dragon legends and hilltop churches dedicated to St Michael—one of the three great dragon slayers of Christianity. He goes on to say that the Chinese equivalent to leys, also believed to follow some kind of sacred earth force, are called dragon lines or *lung-mei*. The significance of all this is that in pagan religion, the dragon was the symbol of fertility. Slaying the dragon refertilised the earth and ensured good crops. In Christian terms, the dragon represented temptation and evil—it is the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3) and the Devil cast out of heaven by St Michael (Revelation 13:7–9).



Churches dedicated to St Michael at Skelling Rocks, Republic of Ireland (above), and Roche, Cornwall (right). It has been suggested that churches named after St Michael were built in an effort to Christianise pagan cult centres. If so, St Michael's church on Glastonbury Tor could indicate that there once was a 'heathen' community to convert—a notion that sustains the belief in Glastonbury's special place in pagan as well as Christian history



The slaying of the dragon symbolises the conquest of good over evil. It has been suggested that Christian legends of dragon slayers were an attempt to Christianise the pagan dragon cult, and that the churches dedicated to St Michael—for no clear reason so often set on hilltops remote from any town or village—were built in an attempt to Christianise pagan cult centres.

At first glance there does seem to be merit in this idea. The dragon features in many early legends, notably in the prophecies of Merlin to Vortigern, which may have been derived from pagan beliefs. And the early



Right: St Simeon Stylites, an early Christian fanatic who lived on top of a stone pillar in a remote place. Followers often gathered around such hermits, sometimes staying to build up a community and a church. This kind of development could explain the location of St Michael's church on top of Glastonbury Tor



Below right: St Michael, one of the three great dragon slayers of Christianity. Occultists make a connection between Glastonbury's church dedicated to him, and leys and dragon legends



Church certainly tried to Christianise pagan sites and ceremonies. The choice of 25 December as Christ's nativity, for example, dates from about AD 336 and was probably chosen to counter the pagan feast of the winter solstice. There are those who say that, in a similar fashion, the Old Testament curse on the serpent was laid to discredit a dragon-serpent cult flourishing when the Jewish religion was young, and that the casting out of heaven of the dragon by St Michael in the New Testament served to emphasise the point.

## Flight from persecution

The whole theory is compelling, but it suffers from the lack of independent evidence. That churches were built in places remote from centres of population seems to lack reason only in the modern context of daily and Sunday services for the local populace. In the early days of the Church, many Christians found it safer to practise their religion away from towns and villages for fear of persecution. Early Christians also often chose the hermit's life of solitude and seclusion and so built their cells in remote places. In addition, communities often developed around fanatical ascetics, such communities sometimes blossoming into a monastery, sometimes a church. The remoteness of many early churches is perfectly comprehensible in the light of the nature of early Christianity.

That a large number of hilltop churches should be dedicated to St Michael can also be explained in the context of early Christian belief. St Michael was believed to have the place next to God on high and to receive the

souls of the dead. In this light, it makes sense that churches dedicated to him should be symbolically in high places.

Whether or not Glastonbury Tor was a pagan site, perhaps Christianised by the cult of St Michael, remains difficult to prove. Even if it was, there is no hard evidence that it was any more or less important than any other site in Britain. Nevertheless, there is often a kernel of truth to be found in ancient traditions, and this may well be the case with the connection of Avalon and Glastonbury, the veneration of the Holy Thorn and the persistent legend of the founding of a Christian settlement by Joseph of Arimathea. All may point to the importance of Glastonbury in ancient times. Also, we must take into consideration the large number of people, ancient and modern, who claim that Glastonbury has a special aura, strange and mystical.

That Glastonbury had and perhaps retains some singular significance is vital to the myths surrounding the place – particularly to the concept of the 'Glastonbury zodiac'.

*Is all of Glastonbury one large zodiac shaped by ancient peoples? See page 2074*





# The last of the Romanovs?

**The young woman who had been fished out of a Berlin canal claimed to be the Grand Duchess Anastasia, daughter of the last tsar of Russia. Had she really survived the killing of the Imperial Romanovs?**

**FRANK SMYTH investigates**

ON THE MORNING OF 18 February 1920 the Berlin police issued a bulletin to the press:

Yesterday evening at 9 p.m. a girl of about twenty jumped off the Bendler Bridge into the Landwehr Canal with the intention of taking her own life. She was saved by a police sergeant and admitted to the Elisabeth Hospital in Lützowstrasse. No papers or valuables of any kind were found in her possession, and she refused to make any statement about herself or her motives for attempting suicide.

As a news item it was trivial enough in a city swarming with despairing refugees, made homeless and stateless by the First World War. As an historical document, however, it may be momentous. For many authorities claim that it records the survival of a young woman who was said to have died with her family in a hail of Bolshevik bullets some 18 months before: Her Imperial Highness the Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolayevna Romanova, daughter of Nicholas II, the last tsar of Russia.

Today, the would-be suicide is an eccentric old lady in her eighties, known to her neighbours in the affluent university town of Charlottesville, Virginia, USA, as Anna Manahan. She married Dr John Manahan, a

Below: Tsar Nicholas II, the last Imperial ruler of Russia, and his family. The Romanovs were all believed to have been killed after the Bolshevik revolution – but an amazing story of survival came to light with the sudden appearance of a young woman who said she was Anastasia (third from right), youngest of the daughters

former professor of history at the University of Virginia, in 1967, in order to establish American citizenship. Dr Manahan, who is almost 30 years her junior, not only helped her gain citizenship but also has protected her from unwelcome publicity. His very name was a shield to a great extent, for under her previous name of Anna Anderson, which she adopted in the 1920s, she became the subject of two feature films, numerous books and countless articles. She was also the focus of the longest legal case of the 20th century, which ran spasmodically from 1938 until 1970 and was still unresolved by the early 1980s.

Each of the two opposing parties in the court case is made up largely of British and German cousins of the Russian Romanov family. They have fought to establish or refute Anna's claim to be Anastasia – and feelings have run extremely high. For example, when the BBC proposed a television programme on the case in 1958, the late Lord





Mountbatten, a first cousin of the 'real' Anastasia, personally intervened with the then Director General – and the project was cancelled. Lord Mountbatten referred to Anna Anderson as 'the impostor' but at the last hearing of the case before the Federal Supreme Court in Karlsruhe, West Germany, in 1970, the five-member panel of judges used no such term. They upheld earlier decisions that the onus of proving her identity lay with Anna, and that she had failed to do so satisfactorily. They also said that 'the death of Anastasia . . . cannot with absolute certainty be shown to be conclusively proved.'

The last known facts about Grand Duchess Anastasia and her family date from July 1918 and trickled out from the mining town of Ekaterinburg (now Sverdlovsk) in the eastern foothills of the Ural Mountains, where the group had arrived in April 1918. Early the previous year, Russia had erupted in violent revolution, and Nicholas, last of the absolutist Romanov tsars, had abdicated in March 1917. The provisional government – a coalition of members of the old Duma, the former puppet parliament, and the new left-wing revolutionaries – took over. Immediately, the family were made prisoners, presumably for their own safety.

For a few months their imprisonment was nothing more than house arrest at one of their palaces just south of St Petersburg (now

Leningrad), but then they were moved to Tobolsk in Siberia.

Following the October Revolution when the Bolsheviks under Lenin came to power, the Tsar and his family were moved to their last known location, the commandeered home of a Professor Nikolai Ipatiev at Ekaterinburg. There they were kept for eight weeks, behind specially built fences with about 50 armed guards.

Externally, Russia still faced attack by the Allies. Internally, the Bolsheviks still had to reckon with the 'White' Russians who were faithful to the old regime.

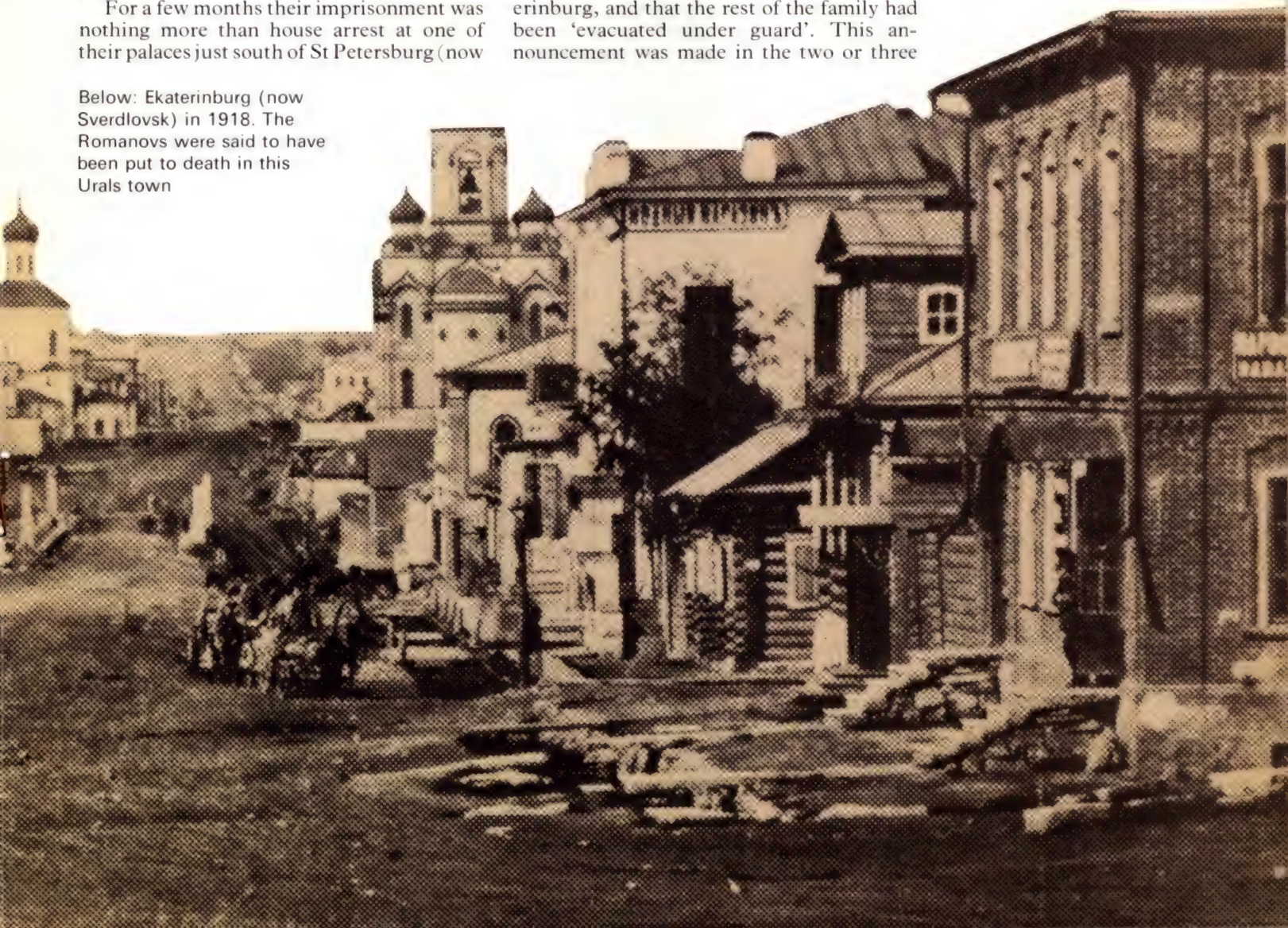
Indeed, the Bolshevik garrison at Ekaterinburg was beginning to panic by July 1918 when a strong White contingent was moving towards the town. On 4 July, apparently on instructions from Lenin's headquarters in Moscow, the raggle taggle guards at the Ipatiev House were replaced by a smaller and more disciplined force. On 16 July, as the anti-Communist White forces drew into battle positions around Ekaterinburg, an early curfew was imposed. And that night, according to standard history books, the Imperial family vanished for ever.

The official statement of the Bolsheviks said that the Tsar had been shot on the orders of the Ural Oblast Soviet governing Ekaterinburg, and that the rest of the family had been 'evacuated under guard'. This announcement was made in the two or three



Above: Lord Mountbatten, the 'real' Anastasia's cousin. He was uncompromising in his opposition to Anna Anderson's claim to be Anastasia, and once put pressure on the BBC to cancel a proposed television programme about her

Below: Ekaterinburg (now Sverdlovsk) in 1918. The Romanovs were said to have been put to death in this Urals town





## Anastasia

days following the family's disappearance. As an official bulletin it was posted up in the town on 20 July, but hastily removed as the Whites advanced. It said unequivocally: 'The family of Romanov has been taken to another and safer place.'

But rumours soon arose that the entire family had been put up against the wall in the Ipatiev House and shot dead. Then, so went the stories, their bodies had been destroyed by being soaked with acid and burned on bonfires at an abandoned mine outside the town.

In fact, this version was put out by the White forces that took the town about a week after the Bolsheviks' bulletin. As evidence for the massacre, they produced photographs of the basement complete with bullet marks. The floors were discoloured as though bloodstains had been washed off hastily.

At the abandoned Ganin mine in the Four Brothers woods some distance to the north of

Right: Ipatiev House, the home of an Ekaterinburg professor used as a prison for the Romanovs. Two high fences were built around the house after the Romanovs were brought here



Right: the Imperial family as prisoners in Siberia. After their transfer to Tobolsk from house arrest at one of their palaces, their imprisonment took on a harsher form



Below right: this bullet-torn wall in the Ipatiev House was said to be the scene of the Romanovs' death in the accepted version of the shooting of the Imperial family

the town, jewels and other artefacts identified as having belonged to the Romanovs were found with piles of ashes, some false teeth and a human thumb. There were also several metal stays from corsets of the kind worn by the Tsarina and her daughters. Apart from the thumb – later tentatively identified as that of the family doctor – no other human remains of any kind were discovered.

On the whole, modern informed opinion tends to side, if only broadly, with the Bolshevik version. The 'corroborative' evidence of the killings found at Four Brothers – corsets, identifiable jewels, and so on – seems rather too obvious, particularly in view of the absence of any human remains apart from the thumb and a scrap or two of skin.

It is notoriously difficult to destroy a human body completely, particularly on an open fire, for the heat simply chars the outer

surface while leaving the remnants even less combustible. Similarly, a body would have to be immersed in strong acid for some weeks to destroy it, and even then bone fragments and teeth would remain. (Teeth are virtually indestructible, whether by fire, acid, or natural decay after death.) As an aid to burning the bodies, pouring acid over them would not only be ineffectual but also positively dangerous to those trying to burn the remains, for powerfully poisonous fumes would be given off.

The White Russian faction may have known this, but it was in their own interests to foster the story of the cold-blooded massacre. The majority of Russian peasants, despite the Revolution, had a deep quasi-religious awe of the Tsar, and the knowledge of his brutal murder might even then have turned them against Lenin's new order. For







Above: as a patient in a mental hospital, this woman stubbornly resisted all attempts to learn who she was – then she began to tell the nurses that she was none other than the Grand Duchess Anastasia

Above right: 'Anastasia' in 1968, six days after her marriage to John Manahan, who has given her security and protection in her last years. Now living in Charlottesville, Virginia, as an American citizen, she is out of the public eye after nearly 50 years of constant publicity

his part, Lenin had good reason to keep at least some of the family alive as possible trump cards in the international diplomatic game. The Romanovs were closely related to most of the European ruling houses including both the Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, with whom White Russia was at war, and King George V of Britain, with whom it was allied.

During the course of research for a BBC film in the early 1970s, television journalists Anthony Summers and Tom Mangold uncovered a mass of information that they later used for an exhaustive book. Both film and book were called *The file on the Tsar*. The file had been gathered – and later, rather unaccountably, suppressed – by the White Russian faction. It contained strong corroborative evidence that the Tsarina and her daughters had been spirited away from Ekaterinburg in a special train with its windows blacked out. According to reliable British information, this train had been waiting in a siding at Ekaterinburg for some time. On the night of the alleged massacre, and with the White forces actually shelling the town, the train had steamed off in the direction of Perm, about 100 miles (160 kilometres) away to the west.

For eight months after that, reports were filed by, among others, a doctor, railway officials and local Soviet officials to the effect that the Romanov women were living at Perm in squalid conditions and under close guard. Anastasia, it seems, had made several unsuccessful attempts to escape. The Perm doctor, Pavel Ivanovich Utkin, had sworn a deposition in February 1919 that in the previous September he had been called to a tenement room by Red Army soldiers and asked to attend a young woman. Apparently the victim of an assault, she had cuts and bruises about the face and head, and was trembling violently though unconscious. As Dr Utkin examined her, she woke up.

#### A startling revelation

'I asked her: "Who are you?"' Dr Utkin said. 'In a trembling voice, but quite distinctly, she answered me, word for word – as follows: "I am the Emperor's daughter, Anastasia."'

Fyodor Sitnikova, a soldier from Perm serving with the 5th Tomsk-Siberian Regiment, had been on leave that September. He gave testimony on how Anastasia was caught as she tried to run away:

I learned from some Red Army men who were there that they had just caught a daughter of the former Tsar, Anastasia, at the fringe of the woods . . . I asked how it had happened, and the Red Army men told me they had gone into the woods to do a little shooting, caught sight of a woman walking at the edge of the woods, shouted to her to stop, but she ran off. They fired and she fell. Then they arrested her and brought her here . . .



These and other statements were collected during the first part of 1919 by Alexander Kirsta, assistant head of White Military Control at Perm, acting under the instructions of General Rudolf Gaida, Czech commander-in-chief of the White Army in the Urals.

The documents were last in the possession of Nikolai Sokolov, who was also the last person in charge of the investigation. He failed to publish them. Instead he produced a book containing the biased version that has become accepted as history. But the monarchist Sokolov guarded the unpublished documents jealously, and took them out of Russia when the Whites were finally routed by the Reds in the late summer of 1919. Summers and Mangold found them in the University of Harvard library, and in California uncovered several other documents relevant to the travels of the Romanov family. But even with these, the Romanov trail petered out at Perm in mid 1919. The final fate of the Romanovs remains a mystery – with perhaps one exception.

This brings us back to the nameless young woman who was the subject of the Berlin police bulletin on 18 February 1920. Taken to hospital after her attempted suicide, she stubbornly refused to identify herself during her six-week stay. Then she was transferred to the Dalldorf Insane Asylum for observation, spending the next two years there. During that time, she was almost totally withdrawn from everything going on around her, and she consistently refused to answer any questions put by the authorities. Nonetheless, she was not declared insane.

And this despite the fact that she had confided in some of the nurses that she was the missing Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolayevna Romanova.

*Is the truth about Anastasia lost for ever in a quagmire of confusion? See page 2066*



# The price of fame

**Many scientists refuse to take the work of psychical researcher Harry Price seriously, pointing to its disregard for scientific rigour and Price's own unashamed delight in publicity. But, asks RENÉE HAYNES, does Price really deserve this treatment?**

HARRY PRICE'S TEMPERAMENT did not endear him to his fellow psychical researchers; many were alienated by his flamboyance, by his self-assertiveness, and by his tendency to claim all the credit for work undertaken jointly with others – and sometimes for achievements in which he had played no part at all. This kind of behaviour might have been discounted as merely an odd quirk of Price's character – albeit an irritating one – but for an extraordinary episode that took place in 1932 to 1933.

In the 1920s Price had investigated at Munich with Baron von Schrenck-Nötzing – known to some of his British contemporaries as Baron Shrink-at-nothing – the exploits of a young Austrian psychic, Willy Schneider (see page 1684), and became convinced that some of what went on was genuinely paranormal. Later, when Willy's talents were fading – as so often happens when psychics reach maturity – Price paid several visits to the Schneider family at Braunau-am-Inn, where Willy's younger brother Rudi was apparently developing even more startling powers as a physical medium, and arranged that Rudi should come to London for tests in his laboratory. He conducted three investigations in which Lord Charles Hope, a leading member of the Society for Psychical Research, the physicist Lord John Rayleigh, and others observed the inexplicable movement of objects, some quite 'heavy', heard violent rappings, and apparently saw the materialised forms of 'pseudopods' resembling hands, limbs or purposeful eels in action. The last of the series of investigations took place between February and May 1932. That April, Price discovered that Lord Charles had invited Rudi to undergo yet another investigation, totally independent of its predecessors – and had not invited Price himself. It is easy to understand his anger – after all, he had done much of the preliminary work, had organised Rudi's visits to this country, and probably felt the latter was *his* discovery – but not the form it took. He waited until the new venture had been carried out and the Hope-Rayleigh report was due to appear; and then issued in the *Bulletin* of his National Laboratory for Psychical Research – and splashed in the press – an allegation that *he* had found Rudi cheating,

backing it up with some rather ambiguous flashlight photographs. This action may have been balm to his wounded pride, but was slow poison to his scientific reputation.

There has been much argument – particularly as, to this day, Rudi Schneider has not been proved to have been a fraud – as to whether Price deliberately faked the photographs, and about the fact that they are in any case open to more than one interpretation. Whatever the conclusions, it remains true that, during the many months that went by between the end of his experiments and the publication of his vengeful 'disclosure', Price had allowed various people, friends and colleagues among them, to believe in Rudi's hitherto undoubted good faith, and go ahead devoting time, energy, thought and money on the project without so much as warning them to take extra precautions.

It was this that nourished the suspicion

Below: Harry Price conducts an experiment with the young Austrian physical medium Rudi Schneider. Together with his colleague Baron von Schrenck-Nötzing (right) – known to some of his British contemporaries as Baron Shrink-at-nothing – Price, during the 1920s, conducted a series of investigations into the alleged powers of Rudi and his older brother Willy







Below: Rudi Schneider in the seance room used by him and by his brother Willy at their family home in Braunau-am-Inn, in 1930. After Price had completed his experiments with Rudi, he discovered that Lord Charles Hope, a leading member of the Society for Psychical Research, had invited Rudi to undergo a further, and quite independent, series of tests. Price's reaction – for reasons that remain obscure, although they did little to endear him to his colleagues – was to splash in the press an allegation that he had already found Rudi cheating

work had been authorised by the Research Advisory Committee of the SPR, which also made a grant in aid of the expenses involved; it was based on a re-examination of the relevant files, and on interviews with as many as possible of those originally involved, and repudiated many of the accusations made in *The Borley report*. (Price himself had died in 1948: the law of libel would have protected him during his life time.) Unfortunately, *An examination of the 'Borley report'* was never published in book form, and its existence is often ignored.

Price was not unconscious of the violent antagonism he aroused. He recognised with regret his unpopularity with both Spiritualists and psychical researchers, and did not conceal the fact that he thought the SPR 'stodgy'. He continued to work on his own plans. He never succeeded in his efforts to get the University of London to accept his offer, first made in 1933, and more than once renewed, 'to found, equip and endow a Department of Psychical Research' there. Though the authorities agreed that this 'was a fit subject for investigation' – itself a

that Price was completely ruthless, that he would even use deliberate fraud to achieve his own ends. And it was perhaps this suspicion that inspired with such venom *The haunting of Borley Rectory*, usually known as *The Borley report*, published by three of his former colleagues in 1956 both in book form and as part of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*. It surveyed his two books, *The most haunted house in England* and *The end of Borley Rectory*. These – written at a popular level, but referring serious students to documents available for further reading – chronicled his experiences, investigations and findings at Borley (see page 1841). Price visited Borley at intervals, conducting thorough investigations and searching interviews with local inhabitants, and even rented the house for an entire year during which he spent much time there with a number of volunteer researchers. In the end Price, who had suspected a certain amount of hanky-panky all along, concluded that some of the occurrences were indeed paranormal.

#### The case for the defence

*The Borley report* reads like a statement of a case for the prosecution, assuming the guilt of the prisoner at the bar throughout, interpreting every doubtful point as evidence against him, and making various suggestions and inferences later shown not to fit in with a full knowledge of the facts. One of the allegations, that Price had buried a number of bones for subsequent 'discovery', took no account of his heart condition, which would have made heavy digging impossible.

In a later issue of the *Proceedings of the SPR*, *An examination of the 'Borley report'*, by Robert J. Hastings discussed its whole argument and its separate weaknesses. Hastings's





## Harry Price

considerable achievement – the problem of accommodation was considered insoluble. In 1934, however, Price became the honorary secretary and editor of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation. Late in 1936 he transferred on permanent loan to that university his magnificent collection of books, now established at Senate House as the Harry Price Library. Among its thousands of serious studies, ancient and modern, of every aspect of parapsychology is a revealing – and very funny – American catalogue with contemporary illustrations, entitled *Gambols with the ghosts*, which was circulated to mediums in 1901. Among the items on offer were ‘Spirit bolts and hand-cuffs’, apparatus for ‘Spirit table and chair lifting’ and, at \$50, a ‘full luminous female form (with face that convinces) which . . . appears gradually, floats about the room, and disappears’.

The laboratory was handed over to the university some months later; the equipment was never again used for research into the paranormal. The library was further enriched with a number of manuscripts, slides, photographic negatives and films. Among the latter were some dealing with the very interesting firewalking experiments Price carried out, one in 1935 with Kuda Bux, and three – the last of them televised – in 1937, with Ahmed Hussein and some volunteers. On each occasion the heat of the trench of glowing charcoal was recorded. The observers finally concluded that success in crossing it unburned depended on taking no more than four strides, with a quick decisive tread.

The acceptance of his library and laboratory by London University must have given Harry Price a sense of public recognition for his work. In 1938 he resuscitated

Right: Harry Price, with his secretary Lucie Kaye – the picture of a successful psychical researcher. In real life, however, Price’s career did not live up to his ambition

Below: the bones of the nun allegedly found by Price in the cellar of Borley Rectory are re-interred in nearby Liston churchyard on 29 May 1945. It has been alleged that Price himself hid the bones for subsequent ‘discovery’; but Price had a heart condition that meant that he would have had to enlist the help of a collaborator to perpetrate such a hoax



the Ghost Club, which had twice faded out since it was founded in the 19th century for the purpose of dining and discussion, and made it a society of much genial and relaxed conversation, good table talk, in which high seriousness and statistical argument played at most a minor part. He also spent much time in lecturing, writing – and of course in the protracted investigations at Borley.

This is a very brief and patchy survey of Harry Price’s life and work. He clearly delighted in exposing fraud, and in demonstrating with glee the many ingenious ways in which it was perpetrated; but there has been no space in these articles to discuss in detail every venture that he made, his meetings with mediums allegedly ‘in touch with life on Mars’, his investigations of dowsing both in the field and on maps, his chronicling of the stigmatic marks shown by a young Romanian girl, Eleonore Zugun (see page 868) and his impression of having seen and touched the materialisation of a dead child, Rosalie, an impression with which he later said he was ‘not entirely satisfied’.



An extrovert, an originator of new ideas rather than an administrator, more interested in the circumstances and details of events than in establishing the principles underlying them, Price, whatever his limitations and his faults, brought home to a great many people that psychic phenomena do sometimes occur, and that this can and should be accepted without first finding a frame of reference into which they fit. In this, his attitude had a curious likeness to that of a very different character, Sir William Crookes, whose reply to attacks by various critics on some of his reports about D.D. Home's levitations (see page 396) was 'I never said it was possible. I said it happened.'

### Friendliness and beer

Price, like Crookes, tried whenever possible to find ordinary explanations for what looked like paranormal phenomena. He frequently succeeded in doing so, often by good management, sometimes by good luck – as when he found himself sitting in an Innsbruck beer garden with a troupe of wonder workers by whose performances he had been genuinely puzzled, having ruled out the use of codes, signals or machinery. Later their manager acknowledged that he had met the local inhabitants on whom miraculous 'tests' had been successfully carried out in various bars a day or two before, and enlisted their help by giving them complimentary tickets to the show and promising them free drinks. 'It was all done,' he said, '*mit Freundlichkeit und Bier*' – 'with friendliness and beer'. This ability to be amused at small-scale rogues probably helped Price's work as much as it damaged his reputation.

It is undoubtedly true that he longed – to an almost grotesque degree – to be famous, to

be universally known, recognised, discussed; but perhaps this longing did not always preponderate in the mixture of motives that governed him as mixed motives govern us all. His overwhelming interest was a desire to expose fraud, which later merged with a desire to record and examine what he called the 'very few grains of genuine phenomena which we so patiently extract from mountains of psychic chaff'. He notes that he would have lost interest in parapsychology 'many years ago if I had found nothing but fraud' but that the discovery of really paranormal incidents 'made it impossible for me ever to give up the quest of *how* these things happen and *why*'.

Right: Eleonore Zugun, a Romanian poltergeist victim whose skin showed raised weals, sometimes in the shapes of letters, when she believed she was being attacked by a devil that only she could see. She was thoroughly investigated by Price in the 1920s

Below: Ahmed Hussein, closely followed by Price and other members of his team, participate in a firewalking experiment at Carshalton, south London, on 9 April 1937



### Further reading

Trevor H. Hall, *Search for Harry Price*, Duckworth 1978  
 Harry Price, *Search for truth*, Collins 1942  
 Society for Psychical Research, *An examination of the 'Borley report'*, 1969



# Great balls of fire

IN 1966 an extraordinary series of events disrupted the normally quiet life of a farming family in Aveyron, France. The simple country folk were utterly bewildered by what took place and when, some four years later, they were interviewed by representatives of the local UFO research group *Lumières dans la nuit*, they asked to remain anonymous as they wanted no further reminder of their nightmarish experience.

**Saucers, spheres and searchlights besiege a farm – and cause one witness to suffer bizarre physical effects. CHARLES BOWEN reports on a dazzling UFO display over rural France**

Unexplained phenomena on the ground and in the air – including ‘flying saucers’ and occupants – followed one another in such numbers that those who saw them had difficulty in remembering the exact sequence of events. But the essential facts of the case were agreed by the witnesses, which led the investigators to believe that, whatever the nature of the experience, it was genuinely paranormal.

## ‘Shrouded in a greenish mist’

Close encounters of the first and third kind: Aveyron, France, 15 June 1966, January 1967

At about 9.30 p.m. on 15 June 1966 a farmer in the rural Aveyron district of southern France was alarmed when he heard his mother-in-law exclaim that the nearby hills seemed to be on fire. Sitting at her window she said she could see strange glowing spheres about half a mile (1 kilometre) away and, as she watched, they approached to within 100 yards (90 metres) of the farm, having crossed hedges, woods and fields in single file. ‘If they come any closer,’ she cried, ‘the barn will go up in smoke.’

Rather disturbed, the farmer looked out of the window and a few minutes later saw a luminous ball 50 feet (15 metres) from the house. He gaped at it for a minute or so, then ‘nothing more . . . flick, gone, like turning off a light’. Seconds later the lights reappeared farther away, then: ‘Flick, flick . . . gone.’

The farmer went outside to get a better look and from the edge of his vineyard 55

yards (50 metres) west of the house he saw six luminous spheres about 55 yards (50 metres) apart. The balls started moving in line, one behind the other, ‘maybe at the speed of a tractor . . . in bottom gear’. They moved soundlessly, and the puzzled farmer watched as they circled in the sky for about half an hour.

Suddenly, the witness saw a ‘shell’ – a massive glowing white object standing on end, shaped like an artillery shell. At first he thought it was a tree on fire, but soon he realised that there were neither flames nor smoke – just a glow. Then the six balls disappeared one by one into the ‘shell’.

The farmer was astonished at the spectacle: he could offer no explanation for the events he had just witnessed. Reassured that there was no risk of fire, he returned to the farm and went to bed.

Some six months later, on Friday, 6 January 1967, there was another sighting.



Right: one of the most bizarre incidents in the series of events at Aveyron took place on the night of 6 January 1967. Seeing a luminous ball at the south-west corner of the house (A), the farmer decided to walk round the building, ‘to get behind the thing’ as he put it; but the sphere suddenly appeared at the north-east corner of the house (B). The farmer made off towards a nearby footpath, but again found his way blocked by the ball (C). He went back to the house (D), then noticed the sphere back in its original position. As he called his son to see the extraordinary sight, the ball disappeared



The farmer went out to the stable to see to the animals before going to bed. He saw a luminous ball – about 4 feet (1.2 metres) in diameter – on the ground some 55 yards (50 metres) away, only 10 feet (3 metres) from the south-west corner of the house. He went inside to fetch a torch and returned determined to ‘get behind the thing’. But the sphere followed him around and even dodged into a narrow gap at one point as if to

impede his path. The farmer called to his son, who had already gone to bed, and the luminous sphere extinguished itself. The son got up and looked out of the window but could see nothing. He was on the verge of going back to bed when, suddenly, a luminous ball appeared outside, and he ran down to the yard.

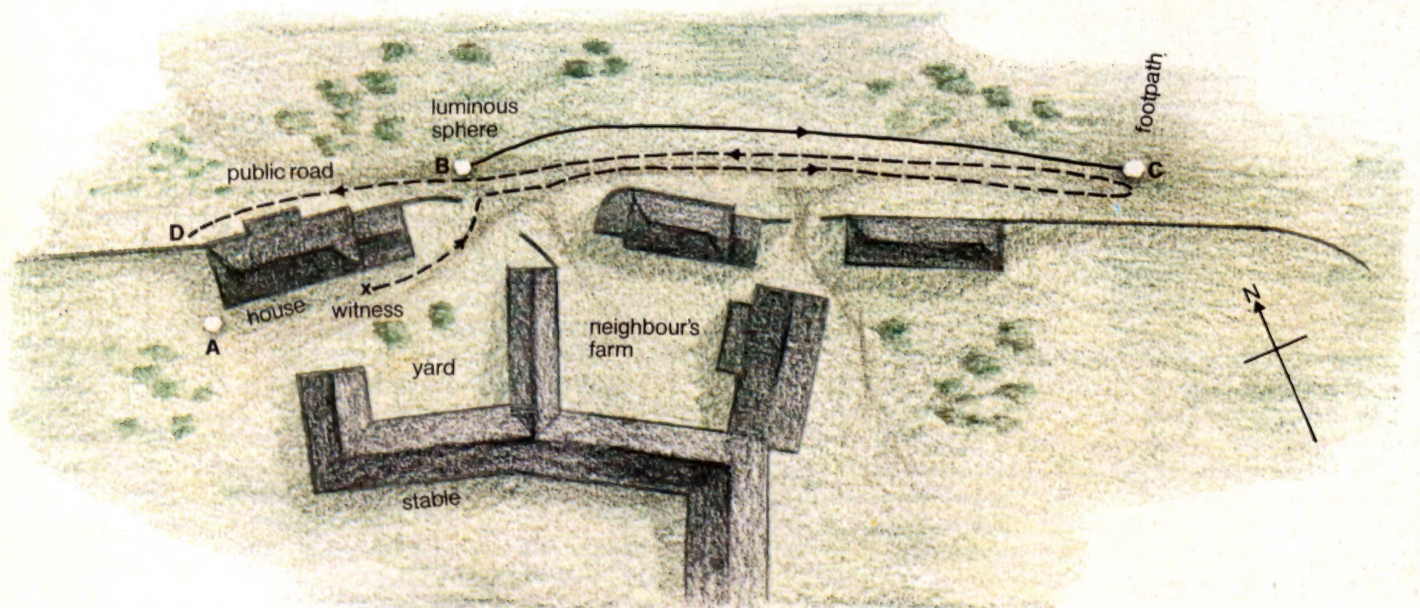
Meanwhile the farmer had become tired of watching the sphere. He had wanted to throw a stone at it, but his courage failed him. He had already decided to go to bed when both he and his son saw the reappearance, some distance away, of the luminous ‘shell’; this, they now observed, had rigid ‘branches’ spaced down its sides. Then six balls of light arranged themselves on the branches, and a ‘searchlight’ on the top of the ‘shell’ directed a beam of light onto the window of the son’s room.

Returning to his room, the son found it pervaded by a light like broad daylight. But the beam did not remain stationary: it revolved, going on and off like a beacon; occasionally it picked out other rooms. Then, at about 11.15 p.m., the searchlight suddenly died out.

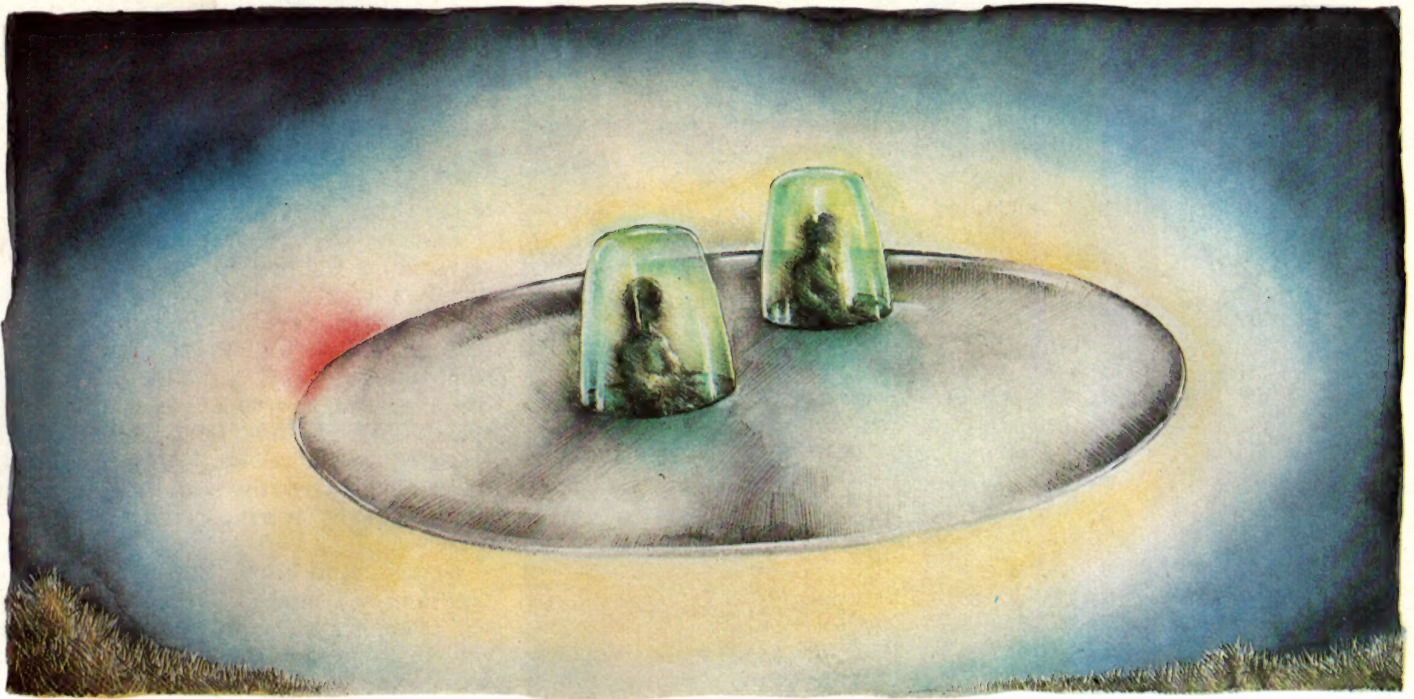
On the evening of 7 January the son saw a greeny-blue light far off in a field at ground level. It was about 9.15 p.m. when he was joined by his father, and soon afterwards they saw the ‘shell’ again.

On another night – probably 8 January, a Sunday – the farmer, looking out from his bedroom, saw the ‘shell’ in the distance and a procession of luminous spheres heading for it. He also spotted one globe veering off towards the house. He called to the two farm dogs and they chased and chivvied the object right up to the railings of the vineyard, but they never got closer than 3 feet (1 metre). Then the light went out, and the dogs stopped barking.

There were distant sightings of the ‘shell’







and attendant balls on 9 January, but it was the events of the evening of Wednesday, 11 January that were most spectacular. On that evening the son saw the 'shell' in the same place as before, away to the west. Next he saw one of the spheres travel along a minor road and turn onto another road, where it stopped in the middle of the carriageway. On an impulse he jumped into his car so that he could follow the sphere's path.

As he approached the sphere it began to move, keeping just ahead of the car. Then, without warning, the 'shell' appeared just inside a field beside the road, and more than 100 yards (90 metres) from its usual position. It was enormous. The son stopped the car – and the 'ball of fire' also stopped. The witness started to get out of the car to get a better view, but at that moment the object became brighter, and there was a shrill whistling sound.

The witness now saw that the 'shell' was about 6 feet (2 metres) off the ground; it was glowing white and had a maroon halo around the top. Then two more glowing spheres appeared and seemed to melt into the body of the 'shell'. Becoming even brighter, and still whistling, the 'shell' tilted over to an angle of approximately 45° and pivoted on a base that was shrouded in a greenish mist. Then it shot off at speed.

The luminous ball on the road ahead now moved off rapidly, with the witness in pursuit. But, on reaching a T-junction, 'everything went out all at once . . . the car lights doused and the engine stopped'. The car was a little way from the junction, and the ball was in the middle of the main road – but later it jumped over the roadside ditch and stopped in the field to the right of the car, about 12 feet (4 metres) away.

Suddenly a saucer-shaped object flew towards the witness. Descending rapidly from the north-west, it was heading south-east and 'fell' to a position over a meadow some 65 feet (20 metres) to the right of the car. The object stopped dead in flight, then hovered about 10 feet (3 metres) above the ground, rolling slightly from side to side. There were two domes on top of the object, set almost diagonally, one slightly behind the other. Inside each dome, bathed in a green light, was a humanoid figure; both seemed to be wearing green overalls and helmets.

The UFO, surrounded by a whitish-yellow glow, now climbed to a height of about 150 feet (50 metres) before sweeping close to the ground. The witness heard the high-pitched whistling sound again and felt an intense wave of heat through his open car window, as if his face were on fire; he also felt 'paralysed'. The UFO made off at high speed to the east, as if 'sliding sideways' said the witness – that is, the two figures in the domes moved sideways and at right angles to the direction they were facing – and as it did so a metal road sign close by began to vibrate.

As soon as the UFO went, the wave of heat disappeared and the witness no longer felt paralysed. The car lights came on again and the engine started at the first attempt.

Six days after the sighting the witness began to have trouble sleeping. Then he slept for 18 to 20 hours a day. He refused to consult a doctor, although pressed by his parents to do so. Occasionally, he awoke suddenly, feeling as if he were paralysed, and at times he also found himself floating, as in an out-of-the-body experience, his mind conscious and alert. The sleepiness gradually wore off until, by mid March 1967, the witness was back to normal.



Dear Sir,

On page 1118 of *The Unexplained*, in the article entitled 'ufos: a Federal case', you refer to the 'Stealth' aircraft, stating that it has already been test-flown, and that in 1975 a mobile radar unit of the United States Air Force picked up such an aircraft accelerating 'instantly to over 2000 miles per hour [3200 km/h]' at Edwards Air Force Base in California. There isn't a shred of evidence to support either of your allegations.

First, the name 'Stealth' refers to a *projected* aircraft type, and Boeing was one of the first of several companies who submitted ideas for it. To state that Boeing's design has already been test-flown is misleading, as is the picture you published, which is merely an artist's impression.

Undoubtedly some Remotely Piloted Vehicles (RPVs) have been mistaken for ufos, since several hundred types – of varying sizes and configuration – are now known to be flying today (see Jane's Pocket Book: *Robot aircraft today*).

The 'Stealth' bomber prototype – when it is eventually flown – will be piloted, and therefore incapable of 'instant' acceleration to 2000 miles per hour [3200 km/h].

Yours faithfully,  
Timothy Good

Beckenham, Kent

*To take Mr Good's points in order: we did not state that Boeing's proposed Stealth aircraft had been flown; we simply showed the artist's impression (it surely being perfectly obvious that that was what it was) of a Boeing design – one that, incidentally, Boeing were not prepared to release to us themselves. Second, that Stealth technology has indeed been tested is pretty well-established in military circles, and was, besides, the point of the story.*

*The aircraft did not accelerate instantly to 2000 miles per hour (3200 km/h), and we never suggested that it did. It simply appeared to the radar operators to have done that by switching on its electronic counter measures (ECM) equipment between two sweeps of the antenna and disappearing from the screen. Without the ECM capability the only way it could have disappeared thus would have been through 'instant' acceleration – a classic UFO characteristic. All this was perfectly clear from the original story.*

Dear Sir,

I am sending you some of my thoughts on various topics you have covered in *The Unexplained*; I do not claim that they necessarily explain the phenomena, but I think they are worthy of consideration.

In the case of spontaneous human combustion [see page 24]: some years ago I read an explanation by Eric Frank Russell that seemed to make sense. I do not recall the chemical details, but this theory amounted to this: many elderly people, not practising the best hygiene, produce substances on the surface of their skin that react like the chlorate-sugar explosive produced by schoolboys.

And in your articles on timeslips [see page 646] you mention a lady suddenly having a vision of York many centuries before, and in that same city a boy

saw a Roman legion marching through a cellar [see page 1986]. Also, there is the famous timeslip of Misses Jourdain and Moberley at Versailles [see page 881]. In all these cases the subject was surrounded by stone – or touching it, as the ladies at Versailles were sitting on a stone bench. And somewhere I read a rumour that a priest had evolved some kind of 'time machine' that obtained images of the past from the 'memory' of stone. The story goes that the Vatican had seized both equipment and evidence. One wonders if stone is quite the inanimate substance it seems to be . . .

On the question of vampires I feel the late T.C. Lethbridge [see page 566] offered a sound theory. In one of his books he referred to an ancient Indian belief (but tantalisingly omits details) that some people (presumably fakirs or yogi) can polarise their body particles and in this way transport themselves from place to place. Now this is very reminiscent of Bram Stoker's description of Dracula's ability to seep, as it were, through a keyhole or the tiniest chink of open window and emerge tangible enough to sink his fangs into the throat of his hapless victim. So an individual might be transported in a stream of molecules, perhaps visible to the human eye only as a cloud of vapour. And if polarised, they might not reflect in a mirror. Equally, with this much control over the body, such 'gifted' people might well be able to assume other shapes. And silver – as in the classic silver bullet – being a good electrical conductor, it might be the only substance that could upset these creatures' strange bodily arrangement. I am not saying that any of this is true, but it is interesting that the Indian belief and the description of Dracula's mode of travel are so similar. Bram Stoker was, I believe, well-acquainted with a German or Hungarian writer, and for some reason European writers and scholars in the mid 1800s were fascinated with all things Indian, so of course Stoker may have learned of the Indian belief from his friend.

Yours faithfully,  
(Name and address supplied)

Dear Sir,

My family and I were on holiday in the Algarve, Portugal, in the summer of 1978. It was almost nine at night; it was starting to get cold and there were some large clouds in the sky. My mother and I were outside our holiday villa, packing away some sunbeds.

Suddenly my mother shouted to me to look up. About a mile [1.6 kilometres] away there was what looked like a silver disc, apparently hovering. It was roughly 300 to 400 feet [90 to 120 metres] above the ground. We both stood and looked at it for about a minute.

Then I rushed inside to fetch my brother and his camera. When he didn't come I went back outside to see the disc shoot up vertically, straight into a cloud. My mother and I watched for about 20 seconds – and then a plane emerged from the same cloud. It was a normal type of passenger plane and could not possibly have hovered and then shot up at great speed.

Yours faithfully,  
John Barrett

Chigwell, Essex



# The Beast and other revelations

**A glimpse of some of the exciting new series starting soon in *The Unexplained***

## **A perpetual motion machine – that worked**

According to science, the perpetual motion machine – one that gives out more energy than it consumes – is an impossibility. Yet, by all accounts, one was made in the 18th century. Its story starts in **issue 102**

## **The imaginary art**

No one quite knows how dowsing works – yet there is no doubt that it does. A leading expert describes the art, its history – and how to do it, starting in **issue 103**

## **The birth of the saucers**

If UFOs are nothing more than hallucinations, why do so many different people have such similar experiences? We present a new theory on the origins of flying saucers that is rooted in clinical psychology. **See issue 104**

## **The Great Beast**

Aleister Crowley claimed to be the 'beast' from the book of Revelation. Others called him more simply 'the wickedest man in the world'. Was he truly evil, or a fake – or did he have strange powers? **See issue 105**

## **People who glow in the dark**

There are people whose bodies give off weird lights . . . and others who can give you a massive electric shock . . . and yet others who are human magnets. A survey of these and other 'electric people' starts in **issue 105**

## **The girl who lived twice**

In the 1840s a respectable German school was disrupted because its equally respectable French mistress kept appearing in two places at once. Her name: Emilie Sagée. What really happened? **See issue 106**

## **Burnt out in Texas**

Two women and a child on a lonely Texas road at night see a huge flaming object descend near them before it flies away chased by military helicopters. They suffer burns, shock, hair loss. A report on this terrifying case starts in **issue 107**

Aleister Crowley, self-styled Beast of Revelation, poses in his magical robes. In his lifetime vilified by the press as 'the wickedest man in the world', since his death in 1947 he has become, as he hoped, 'one hell of a holy guru' to thousands. His slogan 'Do what thou wilt is the whole of the law' was, and is, widely misunderstood, but Crowley the man – drug addict, lecher, sadist and possibly spy – overshadowed his complex and fascinating 'magick'. Yet with all his visionary insight, his last words were 'I am perplexed . . .'

